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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a study of the criteria children's book editors and elementary classroom teachers use to select fiction books for children in grades four, five, and six. A questionnaire was sent to all members of the Children's Book Council and to elementary classroom teachers of grades four, five, and six in each elementary school in Hunterdon County, New Jersey. The respondents were asked to rate twenty criteria according to relative importance and to judge fifteen current themes in children's fiction books according to appropriateness for boys and girls. Significant differences between the editors and teachers were found for ten of the twenty criteria. Teachers gave the use of a readability formula, controlled vocabulary in fiction books, high-interest books for slow readers, books enriching the curriculum, books developing appreciation for beauty, and avoidance of controversial themes significantly higher mean ratings than the editors. The mean ratings of the editors were significantly higher on criteria relating to excellence in writing and quality illustrations. Ten current themes were approved by over 60 percent of the editors and teachers. A much greater percentage of teachers than editors approved of traditional roles for boys and girls as a theme. (MKM)

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BOOK SELECTION CRITERIA OF CHILDREN'S BOOK EDITORS AND ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM TEACHERS

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY

OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

OF

RUTGERS

THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

BY

HELEN McKEON

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Most children's books are originally selected by adults (Huck & Kuhn, 1968). Children's book editors and elementary classroom teachers are actively involved in selecting books for children. The editors, with the backing of their publishers, must select good books which are relevant to the needs and interests of children. Most of these books will be sold to schools and libraries, however, and the editors must consider the needs of these institutions (Karl, 1970). Teachers are involved in trade book selection when they make recommendations to the librarian, select books for oral reading, aid children in choosing books, and plan an individualized reading program. Teachers must be able to evaluate children's literature to judge which books are good and appropriate for the children they teach (Arbuthnot & Sutherland, 1972; Burress, 1966; Huck & Kuhn, 1968; Parker, 1969).

No studies comparing the criteria used by children's book editors and elementary classroom teachers to choose trade books for children were located by examining the Current Index to Journals in Education, Dissertation

Abstracts International, Education Index, and Library Literature under the headings children's literature, criteria, fiction, publishing, and trade books. The supply of children's trade books that is available to elementary classroom teachers is limited by the criteria children's book editors use to select manuscripts for publication. To meet the demand for books which are relevant to the needs of children today, editors have published books dealing with themes concerning death, sex, rebellion, drugs, etc. (Haviland, 1973). Some educators feel these books are too nakedly realistic for children (Cullinan, 1974; Haviland, 1973; Koss, 1973). Since teachers are in a position to influence children's reading choices as well as select books for children, it should be important for children's book editors to be aware of how elementary classroom teachers select good books with appropriate themes for children.

Statement of the Problem

This study investigated the following questions: Do children's book editors and elementary classroom teachers consider the same criteria important when evaluating children's fiction books for the middle grades? Secondly, do children's book editors and elementary classroom teachers consider the same current themes appropriate

in children's fiction books for the middle grades?

These hypotheses were investigated in this study:

1. There will be no significant difference between the mean rating scores of children's book editors and the mean rating scores of elementary classroom teachers on each of 19 criteria.

2. There will be no significant difference between the percentage of approval of children's book editors and percentage of approval of elementary classroom teachers on each of 15 themes between the categories appropriate for boys, appropriate for girls, appropriate for both, and not appropriate.

Importance of the Study

No comparison of the criteria used by children's book editors and elementary classroom teachers to select children's fiction books was found in the survey of the literature. There is a definite lack of knowledge about the criteria teachers use to select fiction books which are good and appropriate for children in the middle grades. In addition, it is hoped that this study will clarify the present criteria used by editors to publish good, economically feasible books which will be relevant to the interests of children.

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following terms need to be defined:

Children's book editors are all those editors who are members of the Children's Book Council.

Criteria are those factors which experts in the field of children's literature, children's book editors, and elementary classroom teachers mentioned as being important for evaluating fiction books for children in the middle grades (see Appendix B).

Current themes are those topics of discourse within a book which were described by Haviland (1973) as representing current trends in children's literature (see Appendix B).

Elementary classroom teachers are a fourth, a fifth, and a sixth grade teacher chosen by a principal of each elementary school in Hunterdon County, New Jersey.

Experts in the field of children's literature are academicians, editors, and authors of children's books who have written standard texts or articles for publication concerning children's literature (Arbuthnot & Sutherland, 1972; Goodman, Olsen, Colvin, & VanderLinde, 1966; Huck & Kuhn, 1968; Karl, 1970).

Fiction books are trade books which include imaginary material, excluding biographies.

Middle grades are grades four, five, and six in public elementary schools and the age range is usually nine to twelve.

Trade books are those books that are not textbooks or part of a graded or developmental series.

Limitations of the Study

The use of a questionnaire imposed certain limitations on the study. Responses on a questionnaire may be influenced by the subjects' moods and environmental conditions when they complete it. The opinions and ideas of the nonrespondents remain unknown. Also, one cannot directly measure the degree to which the editors' and teachers' rating of criteria actually represents their use of criteria in selecting books. A questionnaire cannot measure the intuitive ability to judge books which one gains with experience.

This study represents a consensus of opinion concerning selection criteria for oral as well as silent reading for three grades rather than findings applicable to a particular reading situation or individual student. The findings might have been more definitive for teachers if they had rated the criteria only for books to be read silently by the children. The grade span of three years represented a chronological and mental age range as well as differing levels of maturity.

This was a small study which can only indicate trends in book selection for children in the middle grades. The ability to generalize is limited by how closely other areas of the state and country match the population density and socio-economic status of Hunterdon County, New Jersey.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature related to this study may be divided into the following categories:

Children's book editors and trade book selection

Elementary classroom teachers and trade book selection

The use of trade books in the elementary classroom

The reading interests of children in the middle grades

Children's Book Editors and Trade Book Selection

The criteria of editors.--The Children's Book Council, which represents the majority of children's book editors, lists the following factors which editors consider before accepting or rejecting a manuscript: "Is it the type of book the house publishes? Is it well-written or well-written enough that it could be easily improved? Is there a good market for it? (Writing Children's Books, 1973)." Almost all editors like to feel that they have considered the criteria established

by a consensus of experts in the field of children's literature. Although many of the criteria are considered, some at the almost unconscious level, each editor has his or her own biases and preferences for particular books. The editor must also adapt the criteria to the type of book. A publishing company may limit the number of children's books it will publish (Karl, 1970).

Editors look for a variety of subjects, styles, and approaches in the manuscripts (Karl, 1970). Karl feels that editors should consider children's interests and look for books that are honestly written without didacticism. She also stated that it is important to consider the readability and size of the book, the style of type, illustrations, and cost.

The potential market is very important to the editor. As noted in the introduction, the majority of children's books are sold to schools and libraries. Since the librarians, who do most of the purchasing are knowledgeable and acquainted with good children's books, a book cannot be pushed to success by heavy advertising. The book must actually be good and/or be written by a well-known children's author (Karl, 1970). Once a children's book has become a successful seller,

however, it will probably continue to sell well for many years (Huck & Kuhn, 1968).

Editors and educational research.--The criteria publishers and educators use to evaluate programmed reading materials has been studied (Sherwin, 1972). Sherwin found that they differed significantly on most of the criteria. He concluded that publishing companies and educators agreed on the author's qualifications, and the importance of behavioral objectives, unit tests, and multi-ethnic material. Educators differed from publishers in that educators preferred a branching technique, constructed responses, and desired more detailed information about the field tests regarding the sample, norms, means, reliability, and validity. Sherwin suggested that publishing companies should be more responsive to the educators' advice.

Many publishers are not responsive to the findings and implications of reading research (Nemeyer, 1973). Some editors and publishers, however, would be very happy to receive definitive findings about the needs of the slow reader, non-reader or beginning reader. She stated that:

> The lack of consensus among reading specialists about specific materials needed and differing opinions about reading instruction methods,

> readability formulas, and the like, creates enormous risks for publishers. Publishers necessarily hesitate to invest vast sums of money and staff time in developing educational materials without some reasonable assurance that these titles will sell in sufficient quantities (p. 223).

Trade book publishers who desired to avoid advice from reading specialists felt that trade books are a creation of the inner conviction, honesty, and artistic ability of the author. These books will reach an audience because of their intrinsic interest. The distinction between trade book publishers and educational publishers is blurring, however. Publishing houses with educational divisions are more receptive to research findings in their planning and selection of trade books. In summary, Nemeyer stated that the publisher must listen to the author, distributor, book seller, librarians, parents, teachers, and, obviously, to the readers.

Elementary Classroom Teachers and Trade Book Selection

Criteria teachers should consider.--Teachers must be able to evaluate children's literature and should also consider such factors as the child's interests, experiences, sex, age, and reading ability (Huck & Kuhn, 1968). "The first consideration in

selecting books for a special child or a group of children must be the children themselves (Arbuthnot & Sutherland, 1972)." Huck and Kuhn (1968) stated that the first thing the teacher must do is identify the type of book so that she can apply the criteria which are relevant for evaluation. It is of utmost importance, therefore, that teachers be acquainted with both childhood development and the criteria for selecting books.

The best way to know which books are appropriate is to read them. The teacher may also consult selection aids and compare a book with others on the same subject or theme or by the same author. The final decision must be based on the teacher's own judgment (Arbuthnot & Sutherland, 1972; Burress, 1966; Huck & Kuhn, 1968; Parker, 1969). In addition to choosing books which reflect the child's immediate interests, teachers should select books which will broaden the child's experience and outlook on life. Children's attitudes and interests can change quite rapidly. Also, exposure to a variety of books of literary quality and depth of experience is important (Arbuthnot & Sutherland, 1972).

The appropriate, basic criteria for selecting books of fiction include: "A well-constructed plot, a significant theme, authentic setting, appropriate style,

and attractive format (Huck & Kuhn, 1968, p. 17)." In addition to these criteria, Arbuthnot and Sutherland (1972) stated that the depth of character development should be considered and they were particularly concerned with the importance of quality illustrations in books. Although most illustrations in books for this level are black and white, it is still essential that they are of excellent artistic quality and in harmony with the text. The experts agree that a book should inspire the child's imagination and develop his aesthetic taste. Linguistic principles such as syntactic structure and dialect differences should also be considered when selecting books (Goodman, Olsen, Colvin, & VanderLinde, 1966). Not all books will achieve excellent quality in each criterion category, but the total selection of books should represent a balance of all criteria.

It has been suggested that guidelines and selection aids be established to aid teachers in selecting trade books for children (Burress, 1966; Kent, 1964). In San Francisco, teachers and administrators developed a balanced and representative resource list from which each elementary school could annually select books, supplementary texts, and other reading materials. All the teachers received in-service training from librarians.

There was a rotation of committee members. The committee remained active throughout the year to select new titles and revise the list on the basis of quality and curricular needs. The committee also determined unmet curricular needs which they explained to publishers (Kent, 1964).

Findings concerning criteria used by teachers.--The findings of current studies indicate that teachers use limited criteria in selecting books and are in disagreement with experts in the field of children's literature. Tom (1969) studied teachers oral reading practices in the middle grades and found that teachers tended to select material that was curriculum oriented and available in the school library collection. Eighty per cent of the selections were related to social studies. Sirota (1971) found that from a given classroom library teachers had a tendency to choose the same books for oral reading which children selected as a first choice for voluntary reading. She found the informal criteria of teachers and students to include the popularity of the book, humor in the book, and attractiveness of the cover.

Although the findings were not conclusive, Wilcox (1971) felt her study indicated that experts and

early childhood educators disagree on the importance they attach to criteria for book selection. All of the experts felt excellence in writing to be important in children's books, but only 63% of the early childhood educators responded that they used their criterion. The experts were more concerned about condescension and didacticism in children's books than were educators. Children's interests were considered important by 83% of the experts and 50% of the educators.

As a result of these findings, Wilcox (1971), Sirota (1971), and Tom (1969) suggested that teachers should become better acquainted with selection criteria and children's literature. Wilcox recommended greater communication between experts and educators.

The Use of Trade Books in the Elementary Classroom

Reading programs have often been reduced to a mechanical process where a particular basal reader and workbook, or a particular phonics or study method is taught religiously. Sometimes the teacher is relegated to a position where he or she simply manipulates equipment and records data. "Too much emphasis seems to be on material and processes and too little on children and the ways they learn to read and use reading as they

learn (Beery, 1970)." The very essence of reading, the joy of discovering new worlds and identifying with the characters, seems to be lost in the process of learning to read. To encourage children to enjoy reading and appreciate good books, it is necessary that they be exposed to the many excellent books published in recent years as well as children's classics, that their teachers show their enthusiasm and familiarity with children's books, and that the classroom atmosphere be conducive to voluntary reading (Beery, 1970; Huus, 1963; Miller, 1969; Parker, 1969).

As a result of increased emphasis on individualization of instructor and recognition that children need different types of materials for learning, there has been increased use of trade books in the classroom (Huck & Kuhn, 1968). In a survey of 20% of the school systems in New Jersey, 66% of the respondents listed trade books among supplementary materials found regularly in the classroom. In Hunterdon County, between 65% and 70% listed trade books as a classroom supplementary material (Swalm & Hunt, 1974).

The literature program in the classroom.--In establishing an actual program of classroom instruction, the teacher must consider planning, organization,

presentation, and evaluation. Instruction in fiction is only one part of the reading program. The reader needs to develop reading skills, the ability to critically evaluate reading material, and the ability to recognize and appreciate the aesthetic value of reading material. Before a student can understand the meaning of a book, he must have a large, meaningful vocabulary, be able to use context clues, and be capable of identifying main ideas and supporting details. Once the child has such basic skills, he should become really involved in reading a book and appreciate such literary qualities as story symbolism, realistic characters, a fast-moving plot, enduring values, and well-organized story line. The reading program should have continuity and balance (Parker, 1969).

In planning the literature program, the teacher should consider the child's reading and maturity level, his possible emotional reactions to the story, his background, and his ability to attend to the story. As a resource for planning lessons which respond to the individual child's needs, the teacher should use standardized test scores, I. Q. scores, interest inventories, informal observation, and the recommendations

of other teachers. There should be an ongoing assessment and evaluation of the child's learning. The teacher should establish specific objectives for the program. In teaching literary concepts, it is wise to introduce and develop one element (such as good characterization) at a time. Children should be encouraged to participate in the planning of the reading program. The reading lesson plan should be flexible and responsive to a reader's questions and understandings. The teacher and students should become skillful at posing questions which require more than yes-or-no answers as well as evidence to support the respondents position (Bissett, 1970; Parker, 1969; Sebesta, 1970). The literature program may be organized according to themes which encourage meaningful interpretation of books. When the literature program resolves around common themes, many books at many different levels may be used (Bracken, 1969; James, 1969).

There are various ways to present books and encourage children to read books of high quality. A list of suggested techniques would include storytelling, oral reading by the teacher or child, classroom book contests, book fairs, dramatizations, audio-visuals, teacher-parent communication, and classroom visits by

children's authors and/or illustrators (Arbuthnot & Sutherland, 1972; Bissett, 1970; Parker, 1969).

School libraries and voluntary reading.--Several studies have reported findings about the effects of classroom libraries and teacher recommendations on the reading habits of children. Burger, Cohen, and Bisgaier (1956) showed that lower-class children could be encouraged to read more voluntarily when books were placed in their classroom and the reading instruction included encouragement to read books. In 1969, Bissett conducted a similar study of children in "advantaged suburban schools (p. 79)" and he found that when books were added to the classroom, voluntary reading increased by 50%. When book recommendations of teachers and students were encouraged in addition to the available classroom library, Bissett found that the amount of voluntary reading increased to three times its previous amount. Schulte (1969) found that children were encouraged to read by a person who knew about children and children's books and who was a skillful, enthusiastic teacher. The highest amount of voluntary reading occurred when there was both a central library and classroom libraries in the school. The lowest amount of reading occurred when there were only classroom

libraries. She felt that this might be due to classroom libraries having a limited number and variety of materials. Many of the materials in the classroom libraries related to academic areas rather than to the expressed interests of the children. It appears that the availability of books in a classroom library encourages voluntary reading, but a central school library is also needed to provide a variety of books for children to choose.

Trade books and reading improvement.--The effect of planned, daily, oral reading from books in the classroom library has been studied (Sirota, 1971). Sirota studied 275 sixth-graders from Union, New Jersey. To determine the quality of voluntary reading, she compared trade book titles with those recommended by experts for classroom libraries and with titles listed in the Children's Catalog. In addition, the Ohio State University Critical Reading Test was administered as a pretest and posttest. She found that students who initially scored lower on the Critical Reading Test and those who originally scored high, did equally well on the posttest. The students who score in the middle quartiles scored poorly on the posttest indicating that teachers may overlook the students with average skills.

Girls read a greater number of books and a greater percentage of high-quality books than the boys who participated in the study. Children in the experimental program scored higher gains in the amount of books read, the quality of books read, and the improvement of reading skills than did the children in the control group.

There have also been studies concerned with the relationship of exposure to literature and gains on vocabulary and comprehension scores. Cohen (1968) studied the effect of oral reading on socially disadvantaged second-graders. Teachers in the experimental groups were given classroom libraries from which they were to choose books for daily oral reading throughout the school year. Teachers were encouraged to make themselves familiar with the story beforehand and to read with expression. The books were to be read in an order of increasing difficulty. The teachers were to plan related follow-up activities. The experimental group showed a significant increase in vocabulary and comprehension scores. Bissett (1969) found that a fifteen-week treatment involving a classroom library and book recommendations for advantaged students did not result in a significant gain of vocabulary and

comprehension scores for the children involved. Time and socioeconomic status may have been moderating variables in these experiments.

The elementary classroom teacher, who uses trade books, should be familiar with children's books and create a classroom atmosphere that encourages interest in reading. In addition to teaching basic reading skills, she should develop a planned literature program to encourage children to appreciate literary qualities. Studies have shown that availability of books and teacher's interest encourage children to read more voluntarily. The relationship between literature programs and gains in vocabulary and comprehension scores is not clear.

The Reading Interests of Children in the Middle Grades

Although most children's books are originally bought and evaluated by adults, it is important to consider the interests of the children when selecting books for them. Children in the middle grades usually range in age from nine to twelve. Children's interests in the middle grades are influenced by their peers and by their teachers. Until about 11 years of age, the child can only understand concepts which relate directly to

his personal experience (Ginsberg & Opper, 1969; Gordon, 1969). There have been numerous studies to determine the subjects of books which children prefer to read. Educators, particularly, are concerned with the readability of a book as it relates to a child's interest in a book. In recent years, experts in the field of children's literature have been discussing the need for relevancy in books which will interest children and children's book editors are publishing books which they consider relevant to the needs of children today (Arth & Whittmore, 1973; Cullinan, 1974; Haviland, 1973; Karl, 1971; Koss, 1972). Adults who select books for children must consider the experiences of the children for whom they are selecting the books, the studies concerning children's reading interests, the readability of the books, and the question of relevance in children's literature.

Limitations of studies concerning children's interests.--Many studies about children's interests and favorite pastimes have been conducted. Such studies fall into the affective domain and as such are subject to criticisms about the method of investigation. Measures in the affective domain are "fakeable, vulnerable to self-deception, and usually lacking in definitive

external criteria. Semantic problems exert great influence on the responses to items that reflect differences in degree rather than having a correct answer (Stanley & Hopkins, 1972, p. 301)." Methods of identifying children's reading interests include forced choice techniques, personal interviews, diaries and inventories, records of children's expressed choices among books read to them, asking reasons or examples for choices, and recording each child's favorite story as he recalls it. Attempts to synthesize the research in this field are limited by the fact that different investigators have defined their interest categories in different ways. For example, a story about domestic animals may be found in any of the following categories: animals, humor, adventure, science, or fantasy. Obviously, the findings are dependent upon the categories used (Robinson, 1973). The following studies are a sample of some of the findings about children's reading interests.

Children's reading interests.--In 1926 studies by Terman and by Washburne (cited in Robinson, 1973) found that children in the middle grades preferred to read fiction. Rudman (1955) found that children are not always interested in reading about the same things

that they would ask a knowledgeable person about. He thought this was possibly due to the fact that books may give general rather than specific information pertinent to the immediate question the child wants answered. Rudman also suggested that the books in print might not be relevant to the child's informational needs, the books might not be accessible to the child, and talking about a problem may be more satisfying than reading about it.

Two recent studies determined a rank order of voluntary reading interests. Schulte (1967) found the rank order of voluntary reading interests of children in grades four, five, and six to be: "realistic fiction, fanciful tales, historical fiction, biography, history, recreational interests, science and health, poetry and social studies. A notable interest gap appears between the biography and history categories which indicates that the predominant interests are fiction in addition to biography which is often fictionalized in children's literature (p. 729)." Ashley (1970) studied both likes and dislikes of nine hundred elementary children in grades four through seven for forty subjects of books, types of literature, and specific titles. Boys and girls chose mysteries

as their most popular area of reading interest and their fifteen first choices were: Mysteries, adventure, ghost stories, comics, science fiction, horse stories, real animals, jokes, humor, Nancy Drew (series), fiction, sports, Hardy Boys (series), war, riddles/puzzles. . . . For the purposes of this paper, it is noteworthy that several categories related to fantasy were not ranked at the top of the list: Myth and legend ranked twenty-third; fairy tales were thirty-third; and fables were thirty-seventh. Stories about families ranked twenty-fifth. The first fifteen dislikes of boys and girls were: Love stories, Bobbsey Twins (series), grade readers, war, Nancy Drew (series), pirates, animals that talk, poetry, fairy tales, westerns, jobs, fables, sports, Hardy Boys (series), exploration. . . . The lists are not the perfect reverse of each other because children had the opportunity to make first, second, and third choices.

Children's interest in reading.--Several studies have been conducted concerning the amount of time middle graders are involved in recreational or voluntary reading. Schulte (1967) felt that children are reading more today because there are more children's books available, a greater variety of children's books on the market, and

an increased use of trade books in the instructional program within the classroom. She suggested that the decrease in reading in the middle grades was due to an increase in academic demands, an increase in other recreational activities, and a decrease in the novelty of reading. Ashley (1970) felt her study indicated a strong involvement with reading in grade five when children, particularly boys, recorded the highest amounts of specific likes and dislikes for reading areas. She felt that interests in all reading areas declined sharply in the last half of sixth grade. Long and Henderson (1973) had fifth grade children keep a diary of their activities for two weeks. In order of frequency, these were the activities recorded: Sleep, watching television, unstructured play, structured activities, homework, recreational reading, and chores. About one-third of the subjects reported no recreational reading for the two weeks. The average time for watching television was 15.1 hours per week, while the average time spent reading for recreation was 1.5 hours per week.

Reading interests and the sex of the child.--In 1926 Terman found that the reading interests of boys and girls in the middle grades differed more distinctively

than they had in the primary grades. A more recent study concerning the relationship of the sex of the child to his reading interests was conducted by Schulte (1967). She found that boys preferred to read about historical fiction, history, science and health more than girls did. More girls than boys chose to read about realistic fiction, fanciful tales, biography, recreational interests, and poetry. Boys looked for action and adventure in their stories while girls liked stories that dealt with personal problems and relations. Girls occasionally read books usually selected by boys, but the reverse was not true. Bissett (1970) studied conditions that influence children to read more books, and he found no significant relationships between sex of the reader and the number of books read. Contrary to the findings of Bissett, Sirota (1971) found that girls voluntarily read a greater number of books than the boys and a greater percentage of the girl's choices were of high quality.

Reading interests and the readability of books.--Two studies examined the relationship of reading interests and the readability of books. Smith and Johnson (1972) studied 256 English children whose average age was 12 years, 4.5 months. At the end of

the school year, children were asked to rate the fiction books they had read and their ratings were compared with the Flesh readability formula. Smith and Johnson found that children preferred books that were easy or hard to read more than they liked books which were of middle difficulty. Books with longer sentences had higher popularity, but as the number of syllables per 100 words increased, the popularity of the book decreased. Smith and Johnson found no relationship between the subject of a book and its popularity. Geslin and Wilson (1972) studied whether children with advanced or retarded reading ability were more likely to choose books of interest to their peers or of interest to other children of the same reading age. The findings failed to show that children's reading interests were more influenced by reading age than chronological age.

Relevant themes.--Noting that children today do little recreational reading, experts in the field of children's literature felt that children were not interested in reading because the books available were not relevant to their experiences and personal problems. Haviland (1973) surveyed current trends in children's literature and found that editors and librarians were

looking for books which reflected present life styles. Haviland stated that most young people prefer to read contemporary fiction. To meet this demand, editors have published fiction books with themes concerning "death, drugs, religion, gangs, premarital sex and pregnancy, rebellion and running away from home, maladjusted and handicapped children, and divorced parents (pp. 263, 264)." Haviland stated that it is difficult to find books that deal with these themes in an honest straight-forward and perceptive manner. Today some educators and librarians are upset because they feel the books are too nakedly realistic and some authors sacrificed literary quality and well-formed stories for relevancy and immediacy of issues (Cullinan, 1974; Haviland, 1973; Koss, 1973).

Present supporters of relevancy in realistic fiction argue that when such books are written with honesty and skill, they allow the child to better understand his problems and the diversity within our society (Arth & Whitmore, 1973; Karl, 1971; Neville, 1967). Neville (1967) stated that social values must be an integral part of the story and the story must have real characters, not just puppets to convey the author's message. Sanders (1967) suggested that the

writer of realistic fiction should avoid the tendency to distort reality by painting an exclusively rosy picture or a completely dismal picture of life. She stated that it is also valuable for an author to provide information about how life should be. Neville disagreed because she felt that it is not the author's job to solve the child's problem. She said that the author should strive to write an honest book with realistic characters to make the child aware of the problems that exist and help him realize that others share his problems.

Those who feel that children's books have become too realistic, point to studies that link television to violence, the influence of bad models, and children's psychological inability to cope with abject tragedy (Cullinan, 1974; Haviland, 1973). Although Cullinan (1974) concluded that today children in the middle grades are exposed to problems that the adolescent used to be the first to encounter, Virginia Haviland (1973) feels that children seem to know more and have more sophisticated ideas, but until about eleven years of age the child's knowledge of social and personal problems is only superficial. Yet Cullinan, Haviland, and Koss agree that children need high-quality

realistic fiction, written at a level which the child can grasp.

There does not seem to be disagreement over the need for realistic fiction, but rather differences of opinion about how and when themes involving sex, drugs, etc. should be presented to children. Those who are critical of the abundance of realistic fiction, also argue that children should be exposed to a balanced variety of fiction including realistic, imaginative and traditional books (Cullinan, 1974; Haviland, 1973; Koss, 1973).

Popular themes.--Haviland (1973) also said that children's literature was reflecting interests in fantasy and futuristic science fiction. Ashley (1970) found that children were not especially interested in reading about fantasy. Arbuthnot and Sutherland (1972) stated that fanciful books delight children because they concern things that cannot really happen or which do not exist. A good author makes the fantasy and characters believable and usually the story presents a universal truth such as the power of love (Huck & Kuhn, 1968). Fantasy books may describe imaginary worlds and kingdoms, personify animals and dolls, and endow characters with magical powers. Schulte (1967) found that fanciful tales ranked

second among the voluntary reading interests of children in the middle grades. The science fiction writer creates fantastic future or other worlds based on scientific theories or possibilities (Huck & Kuhn, 1968).

There is a growing trend of books for children which deal with witchcraft and the occult (Cart, 1972; Haviland, 1973). Cart stated that this theme is poorly researched and handled in most fiction books. He felt that some of the books stressed violence excessively. The theme of witches and witch's spells, although very popular now, is not a new theme in children's fiction. In 1959 Elizabeth Speare won the Newbery Medal for her book, The Witch of Blackbird Pond (Arbuthnot & Sutherland, 1972). Her book is classified as historical fiction and is related to real events in our country's history. There are also delightful fantasy stories in the Halloween tradition such as The Little Witch by Bennett (1953). This type of story, relating to witchcraft, has enjoyed wide approval and is available from children's book clubs. Some of the recent books with this theme have described lonely children with emotional problems who turn to a witch or the lore of witchcraft to find an answer to their problems. In The Witches of Worm by Snyder (1972) the girl becomes morbidly involved with

the incantations and ceremonies of witchcraft to be able to exorcise evil spirits. In both this book and Octagon Magic by Norton (1967) the message of the story is that real truth lies in knowing oneself, but the possibility of witches and spells is never really denied. As Haviland noted, a child's interpretation of a story is influenced by his experiences and maturity.

Themes responsive to minority group interests.--In recent years there has been considerable growth in children's literature which considers the interests of various minority groups. There is a growing number of books dealing with the Black experience. In addition, other minority groups, including those of Spanish and Indian heritage, are being included in children's books. Today the theory of the melting pot has given way to a pluralistic approach so that all people can benefit from the culture and experience of the various groups in the United States (Haviland, 1973). It is notable that the groups who avidly support a pluralistic approach were forced to become United States citizens: the Blacks, the American Indians, and the Spanish-speaking (Arbuthnot & Sutherland, 1972).

A landmark survey was made by Larrick in 1965. She surveyed 5,206 children's trade books

published in the United States in 1962, 1963, and 1964. Only six per cent of those books mentioned or illustrated Blacks and when African folktales and historical stories were eliminated from the sample, less than one per cent of the books had Black characters. Black children were being deprived of characters with which they could identify and other children were being deprived of learning about diverse cultures.

Children's literature is a conservative medium and publishers will only publish books which they can expect to receive wide acceptance. Within the last few years, the needs and cultures of minority groups have become better known and accepted within our society. Groups such as The Council on Interracial Books for Children were developed to encourage the publication of multi-ethnic books. The Council publishes a newsletter entitled, Interracial Books for Children. The National Association for the Education of Young Children compiled a bibliography entitled, Multi-Ethnic Books for Young Children (Griffen, 1970). It has become profitable for publishing companies to publish books about minority groups (MacCann & Woodard, 1972).

The task of publishing and selecting multi-ethnic trade books is confounded by the fact that the publishing business is an almost all White, middle-class institution

(Chambers, 1971) and most teachers are from White, middle-class backgrounds (Baxter, 1974). Baxter was involved in a children's book selection committee composed of several teachers and a librarian. She noted that: "Even more discomforting than our recognition of bias in the book was the realization that it is so easy, particularly for those of us who are White, to read such books without that recognition (p. 540)." She concluded, however, that even though the ability to evaluate biased children's books is hard to develop, it is essential that educators acquaint themselves with criteria for selecting multi-ethnic literature, be familiar with the children's books, and consult various bibliographies. Educators should strive to acquire the sensitivity to detect cultural bias. Teachers should expose children to good multi-ethnic literature and encourage children to critically review biased books.

Themes responsive to feminist interests.--The women's liberation movement has also exerted an influence on publication and book selection trends. In 1970 a group of women formed the Feminists on Children's Media because "It seemed to us that the rigid sex roles depicted in most children's books--active and independent male characters, passive and dependent female characters--were detrimental to the healthy development of young readers of both sexes

(Feminists, 1974, p. 5)." This group wanted to sensitize publishers, writers, teachers, librarians, and parents to sexism in children's literature. They published the first edition of a bibliography about intelligent, active girls and women in 1971 and entitled it Little Miss Muffet Fights Back. They did not list books about boys even though the traditional male role in books is also confining and damaging to future development. They felt that there was an abundance of books about boys, they understood the feminine point of view better, and boys would enjoy good books about girls. In 1971 Key described the role of boys and girls in children's literature as: "Boys do; girls are (p. 167)." She went on to explain that boys play actively, fight, and have adventures while girls quietly strive to please. She described the role of girls in books as:

> The Little Miss Muffet syndrome, which depicts females as helpless, easily frightened, and dreadfully dull, occurs over and over again in the literature. If one compares this image, which crystallizes in the formative years of child development, with the potential of women in adulthood, it becomes apparent that both male and female have difficulty in participating in equal sharing dialogues at the professional level. Males who have grown up learning dialogues such as are in children's books today are not able to listen to a female in adult life. Males paralyze when a rare female makes a constructive suggestion. Likewise females are trained not to take their share, or hold their own in decision-making interchange. There are no linguistic models in this early literature for females to take active parts

> in the dialogue nor for males to respond with dignified acceptance and a willingness to learn (p. 175).

There was a tremendous response to Little Miss Muffet Fights Back. In recent years, there has been substantial growth in books with girls having untraditional roles (Feminists, 1974). With the publication of the 1974 edition of this bibliography, Feminists on Children's Media ceased to be an active organization. The bibliography may be purchased through the Feminist Book Mart. The Feminist Book Mart also publishes a bibliography of non-sexist books entitled Girls and Boys Together (1974) which includes books judged to be free of stereotype roles and bias because of race, creed or sex. The title is meant to imply that boys and girls will both enjoy good books with a female main character if she is active, intelligent, and independent. Although it is difficult to judge the degree to which children's literature shapes the child's life or if it only reflects the structure of society, the feminist movement suggests starting with children's literature so that children have an opportunity to identify with untraditional roles.

Summary

A survey of the literature reveals that children's book editors and elementary classroom teachers are both involved in selecting books for children. When selecting

books, experts in the field of children's literature suggest that editors and teachers should consider literary criteria related to excellence in writing. Children's book editors mention cost and potential market. Elementary classroom teachers stress the importance of books that relate to the curriculum. It is difficult to synthesize the studies on children's interests, but it does appear that they enjoy fiction and that the sex of the child may influence his choice of books. Studies have shown that availability of books, planned literature programs, and teacher interest encourage children to read more voluntarily. Relevant themes are considered appropriate for children in the middle grades if they are presented honestly at a level the child can understand. The literature program should include a balanced variety of realistic, imaginative, and traditional fiction books as well as non-fiction material. The interests and needs of minority groups should be respected and reflected in children's fiction books. The women's liberation movement is encouraging editors, librarians, and teachers to select books with untraditional roles, particularly for girls.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE

To determine how children's book editors and elementary classroom teachers rate the criteria used to select fiction books for children in the middle grades and to determine which themes they consider appropriate for those children, a questionnaire was sent to members of each population. This chapter describes the population, the construction and administration of the questionnaire, and the statistical analyses which were used.

Population

The population of children's book editors consisted of members of the Children's Book Council. The population of elementary classroom teachers included teachers of grades four, five, and six from each of the elementary schools in Hunterdon County, New Jersey. Responses were received from 31 (48%) of the editors and 30 (37%) of the teachers. Because some editors and teachers did not complete the entire questionnaire, the response count varies slightly on the items.

The Children's Book Council represents the major publishing companies in the United States which are actively engaged in publishing children's books. For this study, questionnaires were sent to all the 66 members of the Children's Book Council (May, 1973). Two of those members are no longer actively engaged in publishing children's books, so the total number of possible responses was 64.

Hunterdon County covers 429.60 square miles in western New Jersey and this area spreads from northern New Jersey into the central region of the state. The 1970 census population was 69,718 and the population density was 162.3 people per square mile (New Jersey Population Report). Much of Hunterdon County is composed of rural-farming regions. There is some industry, particularly along the Delaware River. Many inhabitants of this county must travel to major cities outside the county for employment and other services (Facts and Facets). In 1970, the occupational employment of people over 14 years was as follows: 24% professional, technical, and administrative; 21% sales and clerical; 34% craftsmen, foremen, and operators; 6% laborers, 2% farmers or farm managers; 10% service; and 5% not reported (Occupational Employment by Municipality, 1970).

Hunterdon County has 31 elementary schools (New Jersey School Directory, 1973-74). For this study, three questionnaires were sent to each school for a teacher of grade four, of grade five, and of grade six. Thus, a total of 93 questionnaires were mailed. Because the directory listed schools which did not have grades four, five, or six, correspondence from the schools indicated that the actual possible number of responses was no more than 81.

Construction of Questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of three parts. The first part has open questions about background information including the data, company or school address and telephone number, and the respondent's name as well as his position or grade taught. The respondent was expected to fill in the blanks with the requested information.

The second part of the questionnaire has a list of 20 criteria with one-to-five rating scales for evaluating children's fiction books for the middle grades. Criterion 10 was omitted due to lack of response and indications that the item lacked clarity. Therefore, there was a total of 19 criteria. The

criteria are based on criteria published by experts in the field of children's literature (Arbuthnot & Sutherland, 1972; Goodman, et al., 1966; Huck & Kuhn, 1968; Karl, 1970), responses of children's book editors to a form letter requesting criteria, and responses of teachers to a request for criteria.

All of the experts in the field of children's literature agreed that it is of primary importance for adults to consider children's interests when selecting books for them. In a fiction book for children the plot should be original and believable, the setting or background information should be authentic, the characters and narrative should be convincing and credible, the theme should be significant and not be used to teach morals, the illustrations should be of excellent quality and enhance the story, and the books should be durable (Arbuthnot & Sutherland, 1972; Goodman, et al., 1966; Huck & Kuhn, 1968). The experts agree that a book should inspire the child's imagination and develop his appreciation for beauty as he enjoys the aesthetic experience of reading quality literature. It is also important to consider children's language patterns and possible dialect differences when selecting books for them (Goodman, et al., 1966).

The Children's Book Council, whose members represent publishing companies, has published a pamphlet (1973) stating that editors are looking for well-written books for which they feel there is a good market. In her book, Karl stated that editors consider criteria related to excellence in writing such as an original and believable story, good characterization, authentic background information, and an appropriate style of writing. Karl, who is a children's book editor, also felt it is important to consider readability, size of book, style of type, illustrations, cost and potential market when selecting fiction manuscripts for children's books. She felt that relevant themes were also an important criterion in children's fiction, but it is very important that these themes are honestly and tastefully presented. The suggestions of seven children's book editors concerning selection criteria agreed with the criteria mentioned by Karl for children in the middle grades.

Ten elementary teachers responded to a request for criteria they consider when selecting fiction books for children in the middle grades. An examination of their responses showed that nine teachers mentioned children's interests and eight teachers mentioned the

reading level of the book. The teachers also mentioned criteria related to excellence in writing; illustrations; print size; length, durability, and cost of the book; teaching ethical and aesthetic values; good books for poor readers; relevance; reader's maturity; and fair representation of various groups.

The information from all three groups was considered in compiling the criteria for this study. The questionnaire includes items of interest to each of the groups.

The third part of the questionnaire lists 15 themes which could be checked as appropriate for boys, appropriate for girls, appropriate for both, or not appropriate. These current themes were described by Haviland (1973) as representing present trends in children's literature. These themes include: "death, drugs, religion, gangs, pre-marital sex and pregnancy, rebellion and running away from home, maladjusted and handicapped children, and divorced parents (pp. 263, 264)." She also noted a substantial increase in books dealing with the experiences and culture of minority groups and in books which placed boys and girls in untraditional roles.

The questionnaire was submitted to the members of the thesis committee for approval. Also the questionnaire was given to a group of fourth, fifth, and sixth grade teachers (N=12) for evaluation of the clarity and discriminability of items and instructions. In response to a suggestion made by the teachers, an explanation of readability formulas was included in the questionnaire.

Administration of Questionnaire

An explanatory cover letter and a questionnaire was mailed to each children's book editor. Principals of all elementary schools in Hunterdon County received a cover letter explaining the purpose of the questionnaire and requesting them to forward one of the three teacher's cover letters and one of the three questionnaires to a fourth, a fifth, and a sixth grade teacher in their school. A post card was attached to the principal's cover letter so each principal could fill in the names of the teachers who received the questionnaire and then return the card.

Statistical Analyses

The mean rating of children's book editors and the mean rating of elementary classroom teachers on each

of the 19 criteria was submitted to a t-test to determine if there was any significant differences between the means. The Biomedical computer program BMD13D (Dixon, 1973) was run to determine the t values. The computer calculated pooled and separate variance estimates. If the variability among each group as measured by the F value was not significantly different, a pooled variance estimate was used to determine the t value. A level of .05 was established as necessary for significance on all tests.

Children's book editors and elementary classroom teachers were given the opportunity to check each of the 15 themes appropriate for boys, appropriate for girls, appropriate for both, or not appropriate. The first two categories were totally ignored by both editors and teachers for all the themes except numbers 12, 13, 14, and 15. Because there was an insufficient response (below five) in the categories appropriate for boys and appropriate for girls on the last four items, a cross-tabulation between the two independent samples and the four categories to determine the chi square was not considered feasible. Only the percentage of approval for the first two categories was determined. The responses in the first two categories were combined

with the third category to form a category appropriate for boys or girls. The choices of the editors and teachers were counted for the categories appropriate and not appropriate on all 15 themes and the data was submitted to the Statistical Package of the Social Sciences program entitled Crosstabs (Nie, Bent, & Hull, 1970). A 2 X 2 contingency table was formed to compare the count and percentage of choices made by the editors in the categories appropriate and not appropriate. When the count in each cell was five or above, a chi square analysis was used to determine if there was a significant difference between the two groups.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, data is presented to compare how children's book editors and elementary classroom teachers rate the importance of 19 criteria used to select fiction books for children in the middle grades. In addition, data is presented to compare the percentage of approval of children's book editors and percentage of approval of elementary classroom teachers on each of 15 themes between the categories appropriate or not appropriate.

The Data on Criteria

Each of the 19 criteria was presented as an individual item. For each criterion, the mean rating of children's book editors and elementary classroom teachers on a one-to-five rating scale was compared to determine if the *t* value was significant (see Table 1).

The first null hypothesis that there will be no significant difference between the mean ratings of children's book editors and elementary classroom teachers on each of 19 criteria is accepted for nine

TABLE 1

DATA CONCERNING THE MEAN RATINGS OF 28 CHILDREN'S BOOK EDITORS AND 30 ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM TEACHERS ON CRITERIA FOR SELECTING FICTION BOOKS FOR CHILDREN IN THE MIDDLE GRADES

Criteria	S	$\bar{X}$	t
1. The plot, narrative and characters are convincing and believable.	E T	4.8 3.8	4.6**
2. The story is unique and original.	E T	4.4 3.9	2.0*
3. The illustrations are attractive and in harmony with the text.	E T	4.2 3.4	2.2*
4. The background information is authentic and relates to the story.	E T	4.6 3.6	3.5**
5. Students interested in the theme and style of language in the book, would be able to read the book.	E T	4.1 4.1	0.2
6. A readability formula (based on such things as sentence length, word difficulty, and complexity of sentence structure) is used.	E T	2.1 3.5	4.0***
7. The vocabulary in the book is controlled by a basic sight word list for the intended grade level.	E T	1.5 3.1	5.0***
8. The length of the book is appropriate for the reader.	E T	3.6 3.6	0.1
9. The print size and style is appropriate for the reader.	E T	4.1 3.9	0.8

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Criteria	S	$\bar{X}$	t
11.[a] Students reading below grade level would find the book interesting.	E T	2.6 3.8	3.3**
12. The theme of the book is not controversial.	E T	1.5 2.3	2.7**
13. The book enriches subject matter in the curriculum.	E T	2.7 3.5	2.2*
14. The book teaches ethical values.	E T	2.6 3.2	1.6
15. The book develops the child's appreciation for beauty.	E T	3.0 3.7	2.3*
16. The book inspires the readers imagination.	E T	4.5 4.4	0.1
17. The book is durable.	E T	2.9 2.7	0.3
18. The cost of the book is reasonable.	E T	3.5 2.8	1.9
19. The theme of the book is relevant to the child's experience.	E T	4.0 3.4	1.9
20. The theme of the book is appropriate for the maturity of the child.	E T	4.0 4.3	0.9

Note.--S = Sample, E = Editor, T = Teacher

[a]Item 10 was omitted from the study.

*p .05

**p .01

***p .001

of the criteria:

5. Students interested in the theme and style of language in the book, would be able to read the book.
8. The length of the book is appropriate for the reader.
9. The print size and style is appropriate for the reader.
14. The book teaches ethical values.
16. The book inspires the reader's imagination.
17. The book is durable.
18. The cost of the book is reasonable.
19. The theme of the book is relevant.
20. The theme of the book is appropriate for the maturity of the child.

Conversely speaking there was a large significant difference (p .001) between the mean ratings of children's book editors and elementary classroom teachers on the two criteria related to determining and controlling reading level:

6. A readability formula (based on such things as sentence length, word difficulty, and complexity of sentence structure) is used.

7. The vocabulary in the book is controlled by a basic sight word list for the intended grade level.

There was a moderately significant difference (p .01) between the mean ratings of the editors and teachers on four of the criteria:

1. The plot, narrative, and characters are convincing and believable.
4. The background information is authentic and relates to the story.
11. Students reading below grade level would find the book interesting.
12. The theme of the book is not controversial.

There was a small significant difference (p .05) between the mean ratings of the editors and teachers on four of the criteria:

2. The story is unique and original.
3. The illustrations are attractive and in harmony with the text.
13. The book enriches the subject matter in the curriculum.
15. The book develops the child's appreciation for beauty.

Respondents' individual comments.--Various comments were made concerning the questionnaire. Children's book editors, in particular, were concerned that a rating scale for criteria is too arbitrary a measure which inhibits the instinctive or intuitive process of selecting manuscripts. Some editors indicated that all the criteria listed in the second part of the questionnaire play a role in manuscript selection. Other editors commented that many of the questions, presumably those related to readability and curriculum, did not really apply to the publishing end. They felt that with the exception of the item about cost, the business and financial aspect of publishing was ignored on the questionnaire. Eleven of the editors declined to respond to item 10, the depth of character study is limited, because they felt the item lacked clarity. Some of the editors explained that the final decision to publish a manuscript is made by an editorial committee or publishing board, which makes it difficult for an individual respondent to represent the consensus of editorial opinion.

Several of the elementary classroom teachers commented that it was difficult to rate each criterion for all middle graders because there is an age and

maturity span from grades four to six. Also in selecting a book for a child, the individual pupil and the individual book must be considered. There was also a comment that the items could be rated differently for oral reading by the teacher and silent reading by the pupil.

There were several comments concerning the use of a readability formula or controlled vocabulary. Some editors said that attempts to determine or control reading level show a disrespect for the child's ability to determine the meaning of large words in context and comprehend the book. They mentioned that if books were mixed up, children would seek and find books at their own reading level. For the convenience of librarians, however, many publishing companies supply a suggested reading range.

Teacher comments on a preliminary trial survey (N=12) indicated that some teachers might not have been familiar with readability formulas and would have been obliged to rate this criterion on the basis of the explanation on the questionnaire. Some teachers commented that the purpose for which they were recommending the book would influence their opinion of the importance of these criteria.

Discussion on Criteria

Criteria rated important by both groups.--Several of the criteria received high approval from both children's book editors and elementary classroom teachers. Both groups agreed it was important that students interested in the theme and style of language in the book are able to read the book (criterion 5). They also felt it was rather important that the length of the book (item 8) and print size and style (criterion 1) are appropriate for the reader. Both editors and teachers felt it was important for the book to inspire the imagination of the child (criterion 16) and for the theme of the book to be appropriate for the maturity of the child (criterion 20).

Determining and controlling readability.--The mean ratings of teachers on criteria concerning the use of a readability formula (item 6) and the use of a controlled vocabulary (criteria 7), were very significantly higher than the mean ratings of editors. As the literature indicated, editors did not consider attempts to determine and control readability important. Both groups, however, agreed on the importance of readability as described generally in item 5, students interested in the theme and style of language in the book would be

able to read the book. Editors feel that a book should read well, but publishing companies should not predetermine or control reading level. They say a reader will seek and find a book at his own level. Although the preliminary sample of teachers felt the reading level of the book was important, the teachers in the study gave the use of a readability formula a rating between average and important and they felt the use of a controlled vocabulary was of average importance. Findings mentioned in the survey of the literature indicated that children like easy or hard books rather than books of middle difficulty for them and that children were more influenced by the interests of their peers than their own reading level when selecting books. Teacher ratings on this survey may reflect their partial acceptance of these criteria when the purpose is to firmly establish the reading level of a book. The fact that teachers gave a significantly higher rating to high-interest books for students reading below grade level (criterion 11), indicates they expect some process to be used to keep the reading level low.

Excellence in writing.--Children's book editors rated the importance of criteria concerning excellence in writing (criteria 1, 2 & 4) significantly higher

than elementary classroom teachers. Although the difference between the means was significant, teacher ratings indicated that they realized the importance of criteria concerning believable and original books with authentic background information. Teacher ratings concerning background information were slightly lower than on the other two criteria. The significant difference between the means was indicated by the findings reported in the survey of the literature, but the teachers' awareness that these criteria were important was not expected.

Small but significant differences.--There was a small significant difference between tne two groups on several of the items. Editors felt it was important that the illustrations were attractive and in harmony with the text (criterion 3), but teachers felt this was only of average importance. Teachers may have felt this criterion was not particularly important because there are fewer pictures and less use of color in books at this level. As the literature indicated, teachers were more concerned with children's fiction books enriching the curriculum (criterion 13) than the editors. Teachers felt it was important for a fiction book to develop a child's appreciation for beauty (criterion 15). Editors, who try to avoid didacticism

or giving obvious messages, did not feel it was important that a book develop a child's aesthetic taste.

Criteria of average importance.--Both editors and teachers agreed that it was only of average importance for a book to teach ethical values (criterion 14) and be durable (criterion 17). When a book teaches ethical values it is difficult to avoid didacticism. Neither editors or teachers are strongly in favor of books that moralize. The durability of a book does not appear to be an immediate concern of editors or teachers.

Cost.--Although the difference was not significant, editors were more concerned with the cost of a book (criterion 18). Editors must consider the cost of publishing a book and the resulting price of a book on the market, but many classroom teachers are not directly involved in purchasing books.

Criteria concerning themes.--Although there was disagreement between editors and teachers concerning the use of relevant themes in fiction books for the middle grades (criterion 19), the difference was not significant (p .07). Editors felt it was important to have relevant themes, but teachers gave this criterion an average rating. The difference between editors and

teachers is better indicated by their responses concerning controversial themes in fiction books (criterion 12). The editors gave this criterion a least important rating and teachers gave it a below average rating. The difference between the groups was significant. Neither the editors nor the teachers felt it was important to avoid controversial themes, but the teachers indicated a more cautious attitude. This finding supports indications in the survey of the literature that some educators today feel that the stress on relevance has resulted in books that are too nakedly realistic or beyond the maturity of the child. Teachers must also consider parent opinion and the life style of the community where they teach.

The Data on Themes

The opinions of children's book editors and elementary classroom teachers were compared to determine any significant differences in the percentage of approval for each of 15 themes found in fiction books for children in the middle grades (see Table 2). Detailed data on the count and percentage in each cell of the contingency tables is reported in Appendix C. A chi square analysis was performed

TABLE 2

PERCENTAGE OF APPROVAL OF CHILDREN'S BOOK EDITORS AND ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM TEACHERS ON EACH OF 15 THEMES IN FICTION BOOKS FOR CHILDREN IN THE MIDDLE GRADES

Themes	Editors' % Approval	Teachers' % Approval	X^2
1. Understanding and accepting death	96%	79%	
2. Use of drugs such as marijuana, heroin, etc.	69%	71%	0.0
3. Witchcraft and the occult	82%	39%	8.5*
4. Religious principles and practices	79%	61%	1.4
5. Rebellion and anti-authoritarianism	76%	46%	3.7
6. Science fiction	96%	100%	
7. Physical handicaps and emotional problems	96%	90%	0.2
8. Pre-marital sex	39%	4%	
9. Divorced parents and substitute parents	96%	82%	
10. Fantasy	96%	93%	
11. Experience and culture of minorities	100%	93%	

TABLE 2 (Continued)

Themes	Editors' % Approval	Teachers' % Approval	X^2
12. Untraditional roles for girls	96%	90%	
13. Traditional roles for girls	59%	83%	2.7
14. Untraditional roles for boys	96%	90%	
15. Traditional roles for boys	59%	86%	

Note.--A chi square analysis was not calculated if the count in one or more cells was below five.

*p .01. There were no significant differences at .05.

when the count in each cell was five or greater. The count and percentage of approval for themes 12 through 15 in the categories appropriate for boys, appropriate for girls, and appropriate for both is reported in Appendix D.

A very large percentage of children's book editors and elementary classroom teachers agreed that six of the themes were appropriate in fiction books

for children in the middle grades. Ninety per cent or over of each group expressed approval for the following themes:

6. Science fiction
7. Physical handicaps and emotional problems
10. Fantasy
11. Experience and culture of minorities
12. Untraditional roles for girls
14. Untraditional roles for boys

On two of the items, 96% of the editors expressed approval, but only about 80% of the teachers approved of these themes:

1. Understanding and accepting death
9. Divorced parents and substitute parents

Over 60% of the editors and teachers responded that two of the themes were appropriate:

2. Use of drugs such as marijuana, heroin, etc.
4. Religious principles and practices

Both editors and teachers strongly disapproved of item eight, pre-marital sex, as a theme in fiction books for children in the middle grades.

The teachers disapproved of two themes which the editors found appropriate. Less than 50% of the teachers found them appropriate, but over 75% of the editors expressed approval for these themes:

3. Witchcraft and the occult (p .01)

4. Rebellion and anti-authoritarianism

A substantially lower percentage of editors than teachers found themes related to traditional roles appropriate. Only 59% of the editors expressed approval for them, but over 80% of the teachers approved of these two themes:

13. Traditional roles for girls

14. Traditional roles for boys

Respondents' individual comments.--Many editors commented on the questionnaire or by letter response that they were not concerned with the theme itself so much as the way it was handled in the books. The editors stated that any theme is appropriate if the treatment is tasteful. Some of the teachers' comments indicated they also did not disapprove of a particular theme, per se, but they doubted that the theme would be treated tastefully enough to be appropriate for the age of the child and community

standards. Concerning the theme of rebellion and anti-authoritarianism, one teacher commented that this theme should be "within limits." She said that themes relating to violence should be avoided. Her comment implies that at least this teacher is concerned about the extreme possibilities of the theme.

Concerning traditional roles for boys and girls, several editors commented that stereotype roles were not appropriate at this time. A couple of teachers commented that children should be exposed to all types of roles. Both editors and teachers commented that the child must be considered as an individual. One teacher felt that both traditional and untraditional roles were not appropriate themes in fiction books for boys and girls in the middle grades because they were not interested in liberation yet.

Discussion on Themes

Results from the second part of the questionnaire concerning criteria indicated that both children's book editors and elementary classroom teachers felt it was important for themes in fiction books to be appropriate for the maturity of the child. Editors felt it

was important that themes be relevant, but teachers gave the relevance of themes only an average rating. Teachers were significantly more concerned that the theme of a book was not controversial. These findings and respondents' comments on themes indicated that editors felt any theme is appropriate if tastefully handled, but teachers had a more cautious approach because they had to consider the maturity and life style of a particular group of children. These indications are supported by the findings on part three of the questionnaire concerning themes.

Sex of the child.--Contrary to findings in the literature that the sex of the child was an important consideration when selecting books for children, the categories appropriate for boys and appropriate for girls were completely ignored for the first 11 themes. A very small number of choices were sex-biased for the last four themes. Both editors and teachers indicated that the individual child must be considered. The arguments of the women's liberation movement seem to have influenced both groups.

The findings of this survey support the statement of feminists reported in the literature that untraditional roles for children in books have become

widely accepted. Although little has been said about freeing the male from sexist roles, editors and teachers felt that untraditional roles for boys (theme 14) were as important as untraditional roles for girls (theme 12).

The data shows that 41% of the editors felt themes related to traditional sex roles (themes 13 & 15) should be avoided. Several editors commented that these themes were not appropriate at this time. Presumably they felt that there were a sufficient number of books with traditional or stereotype roles for boys and girls presently on the market. Most of the teachers expressed approval for traditional as well as untraditional roles for boys and girls. Over 80% of the teachers felt that children should be exposed to a variety of roles. The comments of one teacher that children in the middle grades should not be exposed to traditional and untraditional roles because they were not interested in the liberation movement, would be disputed by feminists. The feminists maintain that role stereotypes are learned at a very young age.

Minorities.--The literature indicated that books dealing with the experience and culture of minorities (theme 11) have become widely accepted in

recent years and the findings of this study support that contention. Of course the problem still exists that generally White, middle-class people select the books about minority groups with whom they have little common experience.

Themes related to children's experiences, problems, and interests.--The theme physical handicaps and emotional problems (theme 7) is a direct attempt to meet the perceived need of children for books that are relevant to their experiences and problems. Both groups felt this theme could be handled in a manner appropriate for children in the middle grades.

Science fiction (theme 6) and fantasy (theme 10) received high approval from both groups. This was expected since, with the exception of Ashley's study (1970), information in the survey of the literature indicated that these themes have high appeal for children in the middle grades.

A large percentage of editors and teachers also expressed approval for themes that deal with death (theme 1) and divorced or substitute parents (theme 9). The mean rating of teachers on these themes reflected a slightly more cautious attitude on their part concerning the use of these themes in books for middle graders.

The teachers had to think of the life style and maturity of their students.

A majority of editors and teachers felt that themes concerning drugs (theme 2) and religion (theme 4) were appropriate. The lower percentage of approval may indicate that some editors and teachers were worried about how these themes are handled in a book.

A very large percentage of editors and teachers disapproved of pre-marital sex (theme 8) as a theme in fiction books for children in the middle grades. This theme received the greatest percentage of disapproval from both groups. One can conclude that pre-marital sex would be a difficult theme to handle tastefully for the maturity level of children in the middle grades.

The cautious attitude of teachers was indicated by their low percentage of approval for two themes that possibly deal with evil and violence. Less than 50% of the teachers felt that a theme concerning witchcraft and the occult (theme 3) or rebellion and anti-authoritarianism (theme 5) was appropriate for children in the middle grades. Seventy-five percent of the editors expressed approval for these themes. A chi square could be calculated

for the theme witchcraft and the occult and the difference between the two groups was significant at the .01 level.

This chapter has reported and discussed the findings determined from the responses of children's book editors and elementary classroom teachers concerning selection criteria and themes for fiction books for children in the middle grades. The opinions of the two groups were compared to determine areas of agreement and significant disagreement.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter contains a summary of the survey to determine how children's book editors and elementary classroom teachers rate the criteria used to select fiction books for children in the middle grades and to determine which themes they consider appropriate for those children. Conclusions regarding the hypotheses are presented and suggestions for further research are included.

Procedure

A questionnaire was sent to children's book editors who are members of the Children's Book Council and elementary classroom teachers of grades four, five, and six from each elementary school in Hunterdon County, New Jersey. Responses were received from 31 (48%) of the editors and 30 (37%) of the teachers. The mean rating of children's book editors and the mean rating of elementary classroom teachers on each of 19 criteria was submitted to a *t*-test to determine any significant difference between the means. For each of

15 current themes, a 2 X 2 contingency table was formed to compare the count and percentage of choices made by the editors and teachers in the categories appropriate and not appropriate. The data was submitted to a chi square analysis when all cells had a count of five or more. A small number of editors and teachers selected the categories appropriate for boys and appropriate for girls for the last four themes. The number and percentage of these choices was reported also. A level of .05 was established as necessary for significance on all tests.

Conclusions Regarding Hypotheses

Criteria.--Nineteen criteria for selecting fiction books for children in the middle grades were examined to determine if there were any significant differences in the mean ratings of children's book editors and elementary classroom teachers. On a one-to-five rating scale one was least important and five was most important.

There was a very significant difference between the mean ratings of children's book editors and elementary classroom teachers on the criteria concerning the use of a readability formula and the use of a controlled vocabulary with fiction books. Editors

felt that attempts to determine and control readability were of very little importance, but teachers gave these criteria an average rating. Both groups, however, gave an important rating to a general description of readability that students interested in the theme and style of language in the book, would be able to read the book. Editors and teachers felt that the reader of a book should find the book readable, but it is not important to determine or control reading level.

Although teachers recognized the importance of criteria concerning excellence in writing, the mean ratings of the editors were significantly higher. Editors also gave a significantly higher rating to quality illustrations in books. Teachers gave criteria concerning high-interest books for slow readers, books enriching the curriculum, and books developing appreciation for beauty significantly higher ratings than the editors.

The findings of this survey showed that children's book editors and elementary classroom teachers agreed that the length of the book, the print size and style, and the maturity level of the reader are important criteria to consider when selecting fiction

books for children in the middle grades.

There was disagreement between editors and teachers concerning the use of relevant themes in fiction books for the middle grades, but the difference was not significant. Teachers gave the avoidance of controversial themes a below average rating which was significantly higher than the least important rating of editors. Teachers indicated a more cautious attitude toward themes in children's fiction books for the middle grades. Editors felt any theme is appropriate if tastefully handled, but teachers had to consider the life style and maturity of a particular group of children.

Themes.--The following conclusions can be drawn from the data on themes relating to the hypothesis that there will be no significant difference between the percentage of approval of children's book editors and elementary classroom teachers on each of 15 themes in fiction books for children in the middle grades:

1. Over 60% of both the editors and teachers agreed that death, drugs, religion, science fiction, physical handicaps and emotional problems, divorced and substitute parents, fantasy, minorities, and untraditional roles for boys and girls were appropriate.

2. The theme of pre-marital sex received the greatest percentage of disapproval from the editors (61%) and teachers (91%).

3. A much greater percentage of editors (over 75%) than teachers (under 50%) considered witchcraft and the occult (p .01) and rebellion and anti-authoritarianism appropriate themes.

4. For the first 11 themes, editors and teachers avoided categorizing the items as only appropriate for boys or only appropriate for girls and this unexpected response appears to be a reaction to the women's liberation movement.

5. To avoid publishing stereotype roles, 41% of the editors rated traditional roles for boys and girls as not appropriate, but over 80% of the teachers approved of traditional roles.

Summary.--The opinions of editors and teachers concerning criteria and themes may reflect their different areas of responsibility. Editors must select well-written books of reasonable cost to sell on the market. They gave significantly higher ratings to criteria concerning excellence in writing and they gave the criterion concerning cost a higher rating than teachers. The editors felt it was the responsibility of the individual reader to select books on his

reading level and to decide which themes are interesting and appropriate for him. The editors felt any theme was appropriate for middle graders if it was tastefully handled.

On the other hand, it is the responsibility of teachers to instruct and guide children. Teachers gave significantly higher ratings than editors to educational concerns such as the use of a readability formula or controlled vocabulary, easy books for children reading below grade level, and curricular needs. In guiding children, teachers must consider the parents' opinions, the life-style of the community, and the maturity of the children they teach. Both editors and teachers approved of a majority of the themes, but teachers had a more cautious attitude toward controversial themes.

The women's liberation movement appears to have influenced the opinion of editors and teachers. Both groups avoided categorizing themes as appropriate for only one sex. Forty-one per cent of the editors disapproved of traditional roles for boys and girls in books, but most teachers approved of both traditional and untraditional roles.

Suggestions for Further Research

This survey only investigated the opinions of children's book editors and elementary classroom teachers. A further survey could be conducted on the secondary level to compare the opinions of editors and English teachers on selection criteria and themes in fiction books for young adults. The results of this study did not indicate why teachers gave attempts to determine and control readability ratings of average importance. A survey could be conducted to determine for what purposes, if any, teachers feel a readability formula or controlled vocabulary should be used to determine the reading level of trade books.

Both editors and teachers approved of a majority of the current themes which are assumed to be relevant to children's interests and needs. A follow-up study could be conducted to investigate whether children are actually interested in these themes. Both groups avoided categorizing the themes as appropriate for only boys or girls. A survey of children's interests in these themes could be conducted to determine any sex preferences.

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APPENDIX A

COVER LETTERS TO ACCOMPANY QUESTIONNAIRE

COVER LETTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOK EDITORS

404 Plainfield Avenue
Piscataway, New Jersey 08854
November 11, 1974

I am doing a master's thesis at Rutgers University on the criteria used to select children's fiction books for publication, purchase, and reading for the middle grades (4-6).

I am interested in determining how you rate the relative importance of criteria for selecting such fiction book manuscripts for publication. Secondly, I would like to know which themes you consider appropriate for fiction books to be read by children in grades four, five, or six (ages 9-12). The responses of children's book editors will be compared to the responses of elementary classroom teachers. No personal or company names will be mentioned in the study.

Thank you very much for your assistance. Please return the completed questionnaire to me in the self-addressed envelope enclosed.

Sincerely,

Helen McKeon

COVER LETTER FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

404 Plainfield Avenue
Piscataway, New Jersey 08854
November 11, 1974

I am doing a master's thesis at Rutgers University on the criteria used to evaluate children's fiction books for the middle grades (4-6). I am interested in how the selection criteria used by elementary classroom teachers compares to the selection criteria of children's book editors. Secondly, I would like to know which themes teachers and editors consider appropriate for fiction books to be read by children in grades four, five, or six. I would greatly appreciate your assistance.

Please forward a questionnaire and a teacher's cover letter to one teacher of grade four, one teacher of grade five, and one teacher of grade six in your school. Then please fill in the teachers' names on the attached post card and mail it to me. This will confirm your receipt of the letter and allow me to contact the teachers personally if there is any problem. Your school and personal names will not be mentioned in the study. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Helen McKeon

COVER LETTER FOR ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM TEACHERS

404 Plainfield Avenue
Piscataway, New Jersey 08854
November 11, 1974

Dear Teacher of Grade Four, Five, or Six:

What judgements do you make when selecting a book to read orally to your class, or to recommend a book to be read silently by a student? The purpose of this study is to compare the criteria you and other teachers use with the criteria used by children's book editors to select books for publication for the middle grades (4-6). Please give your honest, personal opinion of the importance of each criteria.

Secondly, what themes do you consider appropriate in fiction books to be read by children in grades four, five, or six? Please let me know your feelings about the themes.

Your answers to these questions will remain confidential and your name and school will not be mentioned in the study. Please take 15 minutes to fill in the questionnaire and return it to me in the self-addressed envelope enclosed. Thank you very much for helping me conduct my thesis research.

Sincerely,

Helen McKeon

APPENDIX B

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

SURVEY OF CRITERIA FOR SELECTING FICTION BOOKS

A Questionnaire for Children's Book Editors and Elementary Classroom Teachers

I. Please fill in the information requested in the space provided.

Name_____Date_____Business phone_____

Company or school_____

Business address_____

Respondent's position or grade taught_____

II. How do you rate the importance of the following criteria for selecting fiction books for children in the middle grades (4-6)? For each item, please circle the number which best indicates its relative importance.

Example: least important 1 2 3 4 5 most important

1.	The plot, narrative, and characters are convincing and believable.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	The story is unique and original.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	The illustrations are attractive and in harmony with the text.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	The background information is authentic and relates to the story.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Students interested in the theme and style of language in the book, would be able to read the book.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	A readability formula (based on such things as sentence length, word difficulty, and complexity of sentence structure) is used.	1	2	3	4	5

7.	The vocabulary in the book is controlled by a basic sight word list for the intended grade level.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	The length of the book is appropriate for the reader.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	The print size and style is appropriate for the reader.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	The depth of character study is limited.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	Students reading below grade level would find the book interesting.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	The theme of the book is not controversial.	1	2	3	4	5
13.	The book enriches subject matter in the curriculum.	1	2	3	4	5
14.	The story teaches ethical values.	1	2	3	4	5
15.	The book develops the child's appreciation for beauty.	1	2	3	4	5
16.	The book inspires the reader's imagination.	1	2	3	4	5
17.	The book is durable.	1	2	3	4	5
18.	The cost of the book is reasonable.	1	2	3	4	5
19.	The theme of the book is relevant to the child's experiences.	1	2	3	4	5
20.	The theme of the book is appropriate for the maturity of the child.	1	2	3	4	5

III. In your opinion, which of the following current themes in children's fiction books are appropriate for children in the middle grades (4-6)? Please place an (X) under one of these choices:

	Appropriate for Boys	Girls	Both	Not Appropriate
1. Understanding and accepting death	____	____	____	____
2. Use of drugs such as marijuana, heroin, etc.	____	____	____	____
3. Witchcraft and the occult	____	____	____	____
4. Religious principles and practices	____	____	____	____
5. Rebellion and anti-authoritarianism	____	____	____	____
6. Science fiction	____	____	____	____
7. Physical handicaps and emotional problems	____	____	____	____
8. Pre-marital sex	____	____	____	____
9. Divorced parents and substitute parents	____	____	____	____
10. Fantasy	____	____	____	____
11. Experience and culture of minorities	____	____	____	____
12. Untraditional roles for girls	____	____	____	____
13. Traditional roles for girls	____	____	____	____
14. Untraditional roles for boys	____	____	____	____

	Appropriate for Boys	Girls	Both	Not Appropriate
15. Traditional roles for boys	___	____	___	____

Comments_____

_____

Return address: H. McKeon, 404 Plainfield Avenue, Piscataway, N. J. 08854

APPENDIX C

CONTINGENCY TABLES FOR THEMES

UNDERSTANDING AND ACCEPTING DEATH

THE COUNT AND PERCENTAGE BY WHICH CHILDREN'S BOOK EDITORS AND ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM TEACHERS CHOSE THIS THEME AS APPROPRIATE OR NOT APPROPRIATE FOR BOYS AND GIRLS IN THE MIDDLE GRADES

Sample	Appropriate	Not Appropriate	Total
Editors	27	1*	28
	96%	4%	49%
Teachers	23	6	29
	79%	21%	51%
Total	50	7	57
	88%	12%	100%

*Count too small to calculate X^2

USE OF DRUGS SUCH AS MARIJUANA, HEROIN, ETC.

THE COUNT AND PERCENTAGE BY WHICH CHILDREN'S BOOK EDITORS AND ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM TEACHERS CHOSE THIS THEME AS APPROPRIATE OR NOT APPROPRIATE FOR BOYS AND GIRLS IN THE MIDDLE GRADES

Sample	Appropriate	Not Appropriate	Total
Editors	18	8	26
	69%	31%	48%
Teachers	20	8	28
	71%	29%	52%
Total	38	16	54
	70%	30%	100%

$X^2 = 0.0$, no significance

WITCHCRAFT AND THE OCCULT

THE COUNT AND PERCENTAGE BY WHICH CHILDREN'S BOOK EDITORS AND ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM TEACHERS CHOSE THIS THEME AS APPROPRIATE OR NOT APPROPRIATE FOR BOYS AND GIRLS IN THE MIDDLE GRADES

Sample	Appropriate	Not Appropriate	Total
Editors	22	5	27
	82%	19%	49%
Teachers	11	17	28
	39%	61%	51%
Total	33	22	55
	60%	40%	100%

Note.--Due to rounding-up error total percentage may not equal 100%

$X^2 = 8.5$, p .01

RELIGIOUS PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES

THE COUNT AND PERCENTAGE BY WHICH CHILDREN'S BOOK EDITORS AND ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM TEACHERS CHOSE THIS THEME AS APPROPRIATE OR NOT APPROPRIATE FOR BOYS AND GIRLS IN THE MIDDLE GRADES

Sample	Appropriate	Not Appropriate	Total
Editors	22	6	28
	79%	21%	50%
Teachers	17	11	28
	61%	39%	50%
Total	39	17	56
	70%	30%	100%

$X^2 = 1.4$, no significance

REBELLION AND ANTI-AUTHORITARIANISM

THE COUNT AND PERCENTAGE BY WHICH CHILDREN'S BOOK EDITORS AND ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM TEACHERS CHOSE THIS THEME AS APPROPRIATE OR NOT APPROPRIATE FOR BOYS AND GIRLS IN THE MIDDLE GRADES

Sample	Appropriate	Not Appropriate	Total
Editors	19	6	25
	76%	24%	47%
Teachers	13	15	28
	46%	54%	53%
Total	32	21	53
	60%	40%	100%

$X^2 = 3.7$, no significance

SCIENCE FICTION

THE COUNT AND PERCENTAGE BY WHICH CHILDREN'S BOOK EDITORS AND ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM TEACHERS CHOSE THIS THEME AS APPROPRIATE OR NOT APPROPRIATE FOR BOYS AND GIRLS IN THE MIDDLE GRADES

Sample	Appropriate	Not Appropriate	Total
Editors	27	1*	28
	96%	4%	49%
Teachers	29	0*	29
	100%	--	51%
Total	56	1	57
	98%	2%	100%

*Count too small to calculate X^2

PHYSICAL HANDICAPS AND EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS

THE COUNT AND PERCENTAGE BY WHICH CHILDREN'S BOOK EDITORS AND ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM TEACHERS CHOSE THIS THEME AS APPROPRIATE OR NOT APPROPRIATE FOR BOYS AND GIRLS IN THE MIDDLE GRADES

Sample	Appropriate	Not Appropriate	Total
Editors	26	1	27
	96%	4%	48%
Teachers	26	3	29
	90%	10%	52%
Total	52	4	56
	93%	7%	100%

$X^2 = 0.2$, no significance

PRE-MARITAL SEX

THE COUNT AND PERCENTAGE BY WHICH CHILDREN'S BOOK EDITORS AND ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM TEACHERS CHOSE THIS THEME AS APPROPRIATE OR NOT APPROPRIATE FOR BOYS AND GIRLS IN THE MIDDLE GRADES

Sample	Appropriate	Not Appropriate	Total
Editors	10	16	26
	39%	62%	48%
Teachers	1*	27	28
	4%	96%	52%
Total	11	43	54
	20%	80%	100%

Note.--Due to rounding-up error total percentage may not equal 100%

*Count too small to calculate X^2

DIVORCED PARENTS AND SUBSTITUTE PARENTS

THE COUNT AND PERCENTAGE BY WHICH CHILDREN'S BOOK EDITORS AND ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM TEACHERS CHOSE THIS THEME AS APPROPRIATE OR NOT APPROPRIATE FOR BOYS AND GIRLS IN THE MIDDLE GRADES

Sample	Appropriate	Not Appropriate	Total
Editors	27	1*	28
	96%	4%	50%
Teachers	23	5	28
	82%	18%	50%
Total	50	6	56
	89%	11%	100%

*Count too small to calculate X^2

FANTASY

THE COUNT AND PERCENTAGE BY WHICH CHILDREN'S BOOK EDITORS AND ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM TEACHERS CHOSE THIS THEME AS APPROPRIATE OR NOT APPROPRIATE FOR BOYS AND GIRLS IN THE MIDDLE GRADES

Sample	Appropriate	Not Appropriate	Total
Editors	26	1*	27
	96%	4%	48%
Teachers	27	2	29
	93%	7%	52%
Total	53	3	56
	95%	5%	100%

*Count too small to calculate X^2

EXPERIENCE AND CULTURE OF MINORITIES

THE COUNT AND PERCENTAGE BY WHICH CHILDREN'S BOOK EDITORS AND ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM TEACHERS CHOSE THIS THEME AS APPROPRIATE OR NOT APPROPRIATE FOR BOYS AND GIRLS IN THE MIDDLE GRADES

Sample	Appropriate	Not Appropriate	Total
Editors	27	0*	27
	100%	--	48%
Teachers	27	2*	29
	93%	7%	52%
Total	54	2	56
	96%	4%	100%

*Count too small to calculate X^2

UNTRADITIONAL ROLES FOR GIRLS

THE COUNT AND PERCENTAGE BY WHICH CHILDREN'S BOOK EDITORS AND ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM TEACHERS CHOSE THIS THEME AS APPROPRIATE OR NOT APPROPRIATE FOR BOYS AND GIRLS IN THE MIDDLE GRADES

Sample	Appropriate	Not Appropriate	Total
Editors	26	1*	27
	96%	4%	48%
Teachers	26	3*	29
	90%	10%	52%
Total	52	4	56
	93%	7%	100%

*Count too small to calculate X^2

TRADITIONAL ROLES FOR GIRLS

THE COUNT AND PERCENTAGE BY WHICH CHILDREN'S BOOK EDITORS AND ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM TEACHERS CHOSE THIS THEME AS APPROPRIATE OR NOT APPROPRIATE FOR BOYS AND GIRLS IN THE MIDDLE GRADES

Sample	Appropriate	Not Appropriate	Total
Editors	16	11	27
	59%	41%	48%
Teachers	24	5	29
	83%	17%	52%
Total	40	16	56
	71%	29%	100%

$X^2 = 2.7$, no significance

UNTRADITIONAL ROLES FOR BOYS

THE COUNT AND PERCENTAGE BY WHICH CHILDREN'S BOOK EDITORS AND ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM TEACHERS CHOSE THIS THEME AS APPROPRIATE OR NOT APPROPRIATE FOR BOYS AND GIRLS IN THE MIDDLE GRADES

Sample	Appropriate	Not Appropriate	Total
Editors	26	1*	27
	96%	4%	48%
Teachers	26	3*	29
	90%	10%	52%
Total	52	4	56
	93%	7%	100%

*Count too small to calculate X^2

TRADITIONAL ROLES FOR BOYS

THE COUNT AND PERCENTAGE BY WHICH CHILDREN'S BOOK EDITORS AND ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM TEACHERS CHOSE THIS THEME AS APPROPRIATE OR NOT APPROPRIATE FOR BOYS AND GIRLS IN THE MIDDLE GRADES

Sample	Appropriate	Not Appropriate	Total
Editors	16	11	27
	59%	41%	48%
Teachers	25	4*	29
	86%	14%	52%
Total	41	15	56
	73%	27%	100%

*Count too small to calculate X^2

APPENDIX D

THE COUNT AND PERCENTAGE BY WHICH CHILDREN'S BOOK EDITORS AND ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM TEACHERS CHOSE THEMES RELATING TO ROLES FOR BOYS AND GIRLS AS APPROPRIATE FOR BOYS, GIRLS, OR BOTH BOYS AND GIRLS IN THE MIDDLE GRADES

THE COUNT AND PERCENTAGE BY WHICH CHILDREN'S BOOK EDITORS AND ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM TEACHERS CHOSE THEMES RELATING TO ROLES FOR BOYS AND GIRLS AS APPROPRIATE FOR BOYS, GIRLS, OR BOTH BOYS AND GIRLS IN THE MIDDLE GRADES

Criteria	S	Appropriate for Boys Count	%	Girls Count	%	Both Count	%
Untraditional roles for girls	E			1	4%	25	92%
	T			4	14%	22	76%
Traditional roles for girls	E					16	59%
	T			4	14%	20	69%
Untraditional roles for boys	E					26	96%
	T	4	14%			22	76%
Traditional roles for boys	E					16	59%
	T	3	10%	1	4%	21	72%

Note.--S = Sample, E = Editors, T = Teachers

COURSE WORK AT RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

Summer, 1968		
303 A (Kean College)	Language Arts in the Elementary School	Dr. Krueger
Fall, 1971		
290:518	Psychology of Personality	Dr. Leon
290:509	Emotional and Social Maladjustment	Dr. Bardon
Spring, 1972		
299:561	Foundations of Reading Instruction	Dr. Kling
Spring, 1973		
299:505	Reading for Secondary, College, and Adult Students	Dr. Finn
299:564	Remedial Reading	Dr. Goldsmith
Summer, 1973		
299:565	Laboratory in Remedial Reading	Dr. Zelnick
Fall, 1973		
290:501	Educational and Psychological Measurements	Dr. Geyer

COURSE WORK AT RUTGERS UNIVERSITY (Continued)

Fall, 1973 (continued)

290:513	Developmental Psychology: Early and Middle Years of Childhood	Dr. Arnold

Spring, 1974

299:566	Seminar in Reading Research and Supervision	Dr. Swalm
610:582	Reading Materials for Children (K-6)	Dr. Fitzgibbons

Fall, 1974

299:599	Master's Thesis Research	Dr. Fry

Spring, 1975

299:599	Master's Thesis Research	Dr. Kling

VITA

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Educational Background

High School	Cranford High School Cranford, New Jersey Attended 1958-1962
College	Union College Cranford, New Jersey Attended 1962-1964 Liberal Arts
	Rutgers-The State University School of Arts and Sciences Newark, New Jersey Attended 1964-1966 Major--History
	Kean College (Newark State) Union, New Jersey Attended 1967-1968 Elementary Certification
	Rutgers-The State University Graduate School of Education New Brunswick, New Jersey Attended 1971-1975 Major--Reading

VITA (Continued)

Professional Experience

1966-1967	History Teacher (grades 8 & 9) Elizabeth School System Elizabeth, New Jersey
1967-1972	Fourth Grade Teacher Sixth Grade Teacher South Plainfield School System South Plainfield, New Jersey

ABSTRACT

Procedures

This paper studied the criteria children's book editors and elementary classroom teachers use to select fiction books for children in the middle grades (4-6). A questionnaire was sent to all members of the Children's Book Council and elementary classroom teachers of grades four, five, and six in each elementary school in Hunterdon County, New Jersey. The mean rating of each group on each of 19 criteria was submitted to a t-test to determine any significant difference between the means. The percentage of approval of each group on each of 15 current themes was compared and the data submitted to a chi square analysis when the count in each cell was five or above. For themes 12 through 15 the percentage of approval in the categories of only appropriate for boys or only appropriate for girls was determined also.

Findings

Significant differences between the editors and teachers were found for 10 of the criteria. Teachers gave the use of a readability formula and controlled vocabulary in fiction books a very

significantly higher mean rating than the editors. The mean ratings of the editors were significantly higher on criteria relating to excellence in writing and quality illustrations. Teachers gave criteria concerning high-interest books for slow readers, books enriching the curriculum, books developing appreciation for beauty, and avoidance of controversial themes in books significantly higher mean ratings than the editors.

The editors and teachers agreed that the length of the book, the print size and style, and the maturity level of the reader are important criteria to consider.

Ten current themes were approved by over 60% of the editors and teachers: Death, drugs, religion, science fiction, physical handicaps and emotional problems, divorced and substitute parents, fantasy, minorities, and untraditional roles for boys and girls.

The theme of pre-marital sex received the greatest percentage of disapproval from both groups. A much greater percentage of editors than teachers approved of witchcraft and the occult (p .01) and rebellion and anti-authoritarianism. A much greater percentage of teachers than editors approved of traditional roles for boys and girls.

Conclusions

Concerning selection criteria, editors and teachers agreed it was important that students who are interested in a book, would be able to read that book. Teachers gave significantly higher ratings to criteria concerning attempts to determine and control readability than the editors who felt that children can select books at their own level. Editors gave a significantly more important rating to criteria concerning excellence in writing and illustrations. Teachers gave significantly higher ratings to educational concerns such as easy books for children reading below grade level and curricular needs.

Concerning current themes, the editors and teachers avoided categorizing the themes as only appropriate for one sex. Editors felt that most any theme is appropriate if it is tastefully handled for the maturity of the reader. Teachers had a more cautious attitude toward themes. The teachers had to consider the particular children they taught.